¿SOS?



---10 Q'S---

(AKA PRE-EMPTIVE F.A.Q.)

1) WHAT IS THE RELEASE SCHEDULE OF THIS COMIC?

IT'S LOOKING LIKE TWO ISSUES A YEAR (SUMMER AND WINTER), EIGHT TO TEN ISSUES TOTAL.

2) WHAT IS THE RATING?

PG-13; BY MY DEFINITION, THIS MEANS I ALLOW LIMITED STRONG LANGUAGE, PLAYFUL INNUENDO, AND IMPLIED/TASTEFUL INTIMACY...BUT NO VISIBLE NUDITY. ***HEY, COME BACK!***

3) WHERE CAN I FIND UPDATES ON THE COMIC?

I MAY WORK ON A WEBSITE EVENTUALLY, BUT FOR NOW THE BEST PLACE TO LOOK IS HTTP://COMMUNITY.LIVEJOURNAL.COM/ISOCOMIC; UPDATES ARE GENERALLY WEEKLY

4) WHY DOES YOUR WORK LOOK FAMILIAR?

I'M AROUND THE WEB, HERE AND THERE.
--CURRENT LEAD ARTIST ON "BUFFALO WINGS" (BUFFALOWINGS.GRIFFINPARKSTUDIO.COM)
--CREATOR OF THE DEFUNCT WEBCOMIC "THE CLASS MENAGERIE" (WWW.THECLASSM.COM)
--VARIOUS CONTRIBUTIONS TO ISSUES OF "CARPE DIEM" (WWW.CARPEDIEMCOMIC.COM)
--AND OVER TIME THERE HAVE BEEN VARIOUS ART TRADES, EXCHANGES, AND CROSSOVERS WITH MY BUDDIES AT "FUNNY FARM" (WWW.FUNNYFARMCOMIC.COM), "NEWSHOUNDS" (WWW.NEWSHOUNDS.COM) AND "THE SUBURBAN JUNGLE" (WWW.SUBURBANJUNGLE.COM)

5) WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO START THIS COMIC?

WEBCOMICS WERE TOO EXHAUSTING WITH A WEEKLY SCHEDULE, AND I WANTED A PROJECT WITH A LITTLE MORE FLEXIBILITY. THIS WAS SIMPLY A BORED ATTEMPT TO COLLECT SOME RANDOM CHARACTERS I'D CREATED IN A COHERENT SETTING; BUT IT TOOK OFF MORE THAN I EXPECTED AND I FOUND I HAD ENOUGH CONTENT AND PLOT TO FILL A COMIC. CODY'S CHARACTER STOOD OUT THE MOST, AND I JUST BUILT THE STORYLINE AROUND HIM. IRONICALLY, MOST OF THE ORIGINAL CAST HAS SINCE BEEN REPLACED AND AUGMENTED.

6) SO YOU WEREN'T JUST TRYING TO BE THE NEXT BIG GAY FURRY COMIC?

I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT FOR THE LONGEST TIME, I WAS EXTREMELY AMBIVALENT ABOUT MY ORIENTATION (ONCE I ACTUALLY OWNED UP TO IT, AT LEAST), AND I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY THE FACT THAT ONE IS GAY IS SO CLOSELY TIED TO ONE'S IDENTITY. SO INITIALLY ALL I WANTED AT FIRST WAS A ROMANCE COMEDY THAT WASN'T SUPPOSED TO BE ABOUT ***BEING*** GAY, IT JUST HAPPENED TO HAVE TWO MALE LEADS. THE MORE I WROTE, THOUGH, THE MORE I FOUND CODY'S JOURNEY TOWARDS FINDING LOVE WAS MORE INTERESTING THAN ACTUALLY BEING IN LOVE. ALL THE GAY-THEMED COMICS I'VE SEEN ARE EITHER ABOUT SELF-DISCOVERY OR A CELEBRATION OF THE LIFESTYLE; FEW SEEMED TO TALK ABOUT THE AWKWARD STAGE BETWEEN KNOWING AND ACCEPTANCE. SO I DID SHIFT THE FOCUS MORE TOWARDS SOUL-SEARCHING AND SELF-ACCEPTANCE. I STILL THINK I DO COMEDY BETTER THAN DRAMA, BUT HOPEFULLY THE THEME WILL BE UNIVERSAL ENOUGH...

7) SOUNDS LIKE THE COMIC IS A BIT AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL, THEN?

UNQUESTIONABLY. SUBTRACT THE OVERCOMPENSATING MACHISMO AND MASSIVE BUILD FROM CODY, AND YOU'VE GOT A LOT OF ME LEFT THERE. THE FEARS, RESERVATIONS, HESITANCE...ALL MINE. FORTUNATELY MY PATH TO, UH, ENLIGHTENMENT WAS A BIT EASIER THAN HIS. BUT LET'S JUST SAY THE CLASSIC LINE "THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THOSE OF THE OWNER..." DOESN'T APPLY IN THIS CASE.

8) YOU ARE AWARE THERE'S AN UNREALISTCALLY HIGH PERCENTAGE OF BUFF/GAY/BOTH GUYS IN THIS COMIC, RIGHT?

NO DENYING IT; IT'S A LABOR OF LOVE, AND I'M NOT SPENDING ALL THIS TIME ON IT UNLESS IT'S FUN TO DRAW. I DO UPHOLD TWO THINGS: ONE, THAT ATHLETIC GUYS HANG AROUND IN CLIQUES SO IT'S NOT UNUSUAL TO SEE THEM CONGREGATE; AND TWO, I MAKE A CONCERTED EFFORT TO PLACE THESE GUYS IN A STRAIGHT, AVERAGE WORLD, EVEN IF I FOCUS ON THE HUNKS. LOOK CAREFULLY AT WHAT IS IN THE BACKGROUNDS.
BY THE WAY, THEY'RE NOT ***ALL*** CONFIRMED GAY, YANNO. PROJECTING A LITTLE, ARE WE?

9) ARE YOU ON CRACK WHEN YOU DESIGN THE PAGE LAYOUTS?

NOPE. ALL I KNOW IS I'D BE BORED STIFF IF I KEPT THINGS IN CONSISTENT RECTANGLES PAGE AFTER PAGE. THIS KEEPS ME INTERESTED. I APOLOGIZE IN ADVANCE FOR MIGRAINES.

10) DO YOU MIND IF I MAKE/POST FANFIC OR FANART?

I FEEL HORRENDOUSLY POMPOUS PUTTING THIS QUESTION HERE, BUT I STILL GET ASKED IT ABOUT THE CLASS MENAGERIE, THREE YEARS AFTER THE FACT. AS LONG AS PROPER CREDIT IS GIVEN AND IT'S BELOW PG-13, KNOCK YOURSELF OUT, YOU DON'T NEED TO GET PERMISSION FIRST. UM, BUT PLEASE DON'T TRY MAKING ***ANYTHING*** R AND ABOVE, THANKS.

iSO CHAPTER 3



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HEY NOW, HOLD UP, TIGER. YOU'RE THE BIG MACHO BOUNCER, REMEMBER? REIGN YOURSELF IN, AND STOP SMIRKING BEFORE SOMEONE NOTICES. DO YOU WANT TO BE PEGGED AS A GIGGLING LITTLE FOOL? OR A FAIRY?

STILL, SCORE. NOW I WONDER IF HE'S GAY OR BI... I WONDER IF THAT MEANS HE'S INTERESTED IN ME. HELL, I WONDER IF HE'S TAKEN. I WONDER IF I'LL GET MYSELF FIRED IF I DON'T STOP THINKING ABOUT THIS. YEAH...LET'S DEAL WITH THIS LATER. THE LAST THING I NEED ON MY FIRST DAY IS ANY MORE STRESS...

WHAT TH-- AW MAN, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, THOR?

A BUDDY SAID THEY'D HIRED THE FIRST FEMALE BOUNCER IN TOWN HERE, AND I HAD TO CHECK HER OUT MYSELF.

I CAN SEE HOW HE MADE AN HONEST MISTAKE.

S'OKAY, I PREFER HAVING CUSTOMERS LIKE YOU, REALLY.

MAKES MY JOB EASIER. IT'S THE POPULAR PARTYING CASANOVAS THAT CAUSE HEADACHES. NO, NO, I DON'T NEED YOUR ID, THANKS.

GREAT. WHAT ELSE CAN GO WRONG?

AI SEE YA LAIKE THE SHIRT WE GOT YA, CODY.

YEAH, AND IT FITS GREAT, THANKS...

OH, HELL NO...

WHAT ARE YOU TWO DOING HERE?! WHY CAN'T YOU JUST LEAVE ME ALONE?

WE WERE TRYING TO, DUDE! JAKE THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE A QUIET NIGHT IN THE ROOM, SO WE CAME HERE.

WHY *HERE?*

'TWAS THE LAUST PLAICE AI THOUGHT YA'D SHOW UP. I MEAN, SINCE YA DON'T DRINK AND ALL...

NOW, WAIT A SEC. 'OW DID YA GET THIS JOB, ANYWAY? YA SAID YER NAUT TWENTY-ONE YET...DO THEY KNOW THAUT?

HE'S RIGHT! HOW...?

HM...SAM SPECIFICALLY SAID DOUG WAS THEIR NUMBERS GUY..MAYBE TYRONE ISN'T MUCH FOR MATH. I WONDER IF THAT MEANS HE MISCALCULATED MY BIRTHDATE... OR JUST PLAIN DIDN'T NOTICE...

THEY NEVER WILL IF YOU CAN'T GET INSIDE.

SO GET LOST.

KIND OF EARLY TO BE THROWING CUSTOMERS OUT, ISN'T IT?

NOT IF THEY'RE TROUBLEMAKERS.

AND YOU CONCLUDED THIS IN THE THIRTY SECONDS THEY'VE BEEN HERE HOW...?

I *KNOW* THESE BOZOS. ONE'S MY ROOMMATE.

BLINK

BLINK

THAT'S HOW YOU TREAT YOUR *ROOMMATE?* NO WARNING, NO ONE-TIME PASS, JUST A HEAVE-HO OUT THE DOOR?

YOU TRY DEALING WITH HIM.

OH? MAYBE HE--

OH BOOOYS...

DID YOU KNOW I DISCOVERED CODY IS *EXTREMELY* TICKLISH?

OH

HEY!

REALLY?

NO, C'MON! DON'T EMBARRASS ME ON THE JOB!

JUST GO IN ALREADY!

THANKS, MAITE.

GRRRRR...

THAT'S IT. GAME OVER.

THIS JOB IS RUINED NOW..

OKAY, MAYBE NOT...

I STILL GOTTA FIND OUT WHAT DOUG THINKS OF ME FIRST, THOUGH...

'NIGHT.

AAAAND I GUESS I'LL FIND OUT NEXT TIME.

YEAH. NEXT TIME.

OIP

BACK! HUH? JAKE? OH, FOR THE LOVE OF--WHAT DO YOU WANT NOW?

JUST SEEIN' IF YA'D LAIKE T'GO T' THE GYM THIS MORNING.

THE--? YOU WOKE ME FOR *THAT?!* AFTER LAST NIGHT?

SURE, WHY NAUT? AI'LL BET YA COULD USE A SPOTTAH.

YOU'RE POSITIVELY INSANE, YOU KNOW THAT? *YAAAWN*... BUT...MAYBE I'LL TAKE YOU UP ON THAT, SINCE I'M ALREADY...

AI KNOW A FABULOUS EXERCAISE FOAH THE GLUTES, MAITE, WINK WINK.

UM...

I'M...

ALREADY... UP....

ACTUALLY, ER...HANG ON A SEC...

BORIS! BORIS...? CRAP, WHAT ROOM WAS HE IN...?

AH, THERE YOU ARE! SAY, UM, YOU REMEMBER WE WERE GONNA MEET FOR COFFEE THIS MORNING, RIGHT?

NO? WANNA GO ANYWAY?

GREAT! GIMME THREE MINUTES. I'LL MEET YOU OUT HERE.

MUNCH

MUNCH

COFFEE, EH? IF IT'S ALRAIGHT WITH YOU, I'D LAIKE TO COME WITH...

HRM. I DUNNO.

DO YOU WANT ALL THAT CAFFEINE AND JUNK IN YOUR STOMACH RIBHT BEFORE EXERCISE? AND IT'D REALLY DELAY YOUR WORKOUT IF YOU HAVE TO WAIT FOR IT TO DIBEST....

WELL... P'RHAPS AI'LL PASS FOAH NOW...

MAYBE NEXT TIME THEN!

ZOOM

...NAH, I'D NEVER JOIN THE FOOTBALL TEAM HERE...

WELCOME TO GROUNDS HERO!

I ONLY SIGNED UP IN HIGH SCHOOL CUZ I WAS PERSUADED BY MY FRIEND--

...EX-FRIEND, ACTUALLY...

BRRRR! SUDDENLY SEEMS LIKE IT GOT RATHER...COLD IN HERE.

ONE GRANDE CAFE MOCHA...

MUST BE SOMEONE *OVERCOMPENSATING* WITH THE AIR CONDITIONER.

...WITH AN EXTRA SHOT, FOR "CODY."

TOUCHÉ.

ANYWAY, BORIS, AS I WAS SAYING BEFORE WE WERE SO RUDELY INTERRUPTED--

OOH, BLUEBERRY SCONES? I'D GET ONE IF SOMEONE TASTE TESTED 'EM FIRST...

MMPH.

STILL EAGER FOR CONVERSATION?

LOOK, IF YOU WANT TO TALK, THIS IS SO NOT THE PLACE FOR IT.

OF COURSE, BUT IT'S NOT LIKE YOU'VE BEEN EASY TO TRACK DOWN.

YOU DIDN'T PICK UP THE LAST TIME I CALLED...

YEAH, AND YOU KNOW I LIKE CONFRONTATION SO MUCH BETTER.

FAIR ENOUGH. I JUST... DIDN'T KNOW IF YOU NEEDED MORE TIME TO COOL DOWN, OR IF YOU'D WRITTEN ME OFF PERMANENTLY. SO WHEN I SAW YOU HERE...

ERG. I... I CAN'T SAY NOW. IT'S MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT.

ALL RIGHT. IT'S NOT HOPELESS?

MAYBE. I DUNNO, IT'S BEEN KINDA HECTIC HERE LATELY.

ARE YOU IGNORING ME 'TIL THEN? CAN I EVEN SAY HI?

WELL...

WOULD YOU PREFER I LEAVE THE ROOM ANYTIME YOU ENTER?

CAN YOU SHUT UP AND LET ME THINK?!

SORRY. I GUESS I'VE BEEN KIND OF ANXIOUS FOR ANY SORT OF RESOLUTION.

MY ROOM NUMBER'S IN YOUR YOUR VOICEMAIL IF YOU NEED IT.

VOICEMAIL? LAST NIGHT? HE MUST'VE LEFT IT WHILE I WAS AT WORK...

YOU HAVE... *TWO*... NEW MESSAGES.

TWO?

MESSAGE ONE: HI DEAR, IT'S MOM. WHERE ARE YOU, YOU HAVEN'T PICKED UP ALL NIGHT? PLEASE CALL US BACK. LOVE YOU. BYE.

GYAH! THAT'S RIGHT, THEY DON'T KNOW I HAVE A NIGHT JOB YET...

HOW AM I GONNA BREAK THIS TO THEM? I CAN'T HIDE IT FOREVER.

I JUST KNOW AS SOON AS THEY FIND OUT I'M A BOUNCER, THEY'LL THINK--

CODY! AT A BAR? BUT IT'S SO DANGEROUS! AND YOU'RE UNDERAGE!

I DON'T KNOW, SON. THIS MIGHT INTERFERE WITH YOUR STUDIES.

THEY WON'T BE HAPPY. WHAT IF THEY MAKE ME LEAVE?

FEH! CODY SURE TURNED OUT TO BE UNRELIABLE.

GUESS I WAS RIGHT ABOUT HIM.

I'LL LOOK LIKE A QUITTER IN FRONT OF DOUG. OR A LOSER. OR BOTH.

THERE'S GOT TO BE SOME WAY I CAN SELL THEM ON THE IDEA.

HERE'S YOUR CHANGE. HAVE A NICE DAY!

THAT'S IT!

AND I'LL JUST TELL THEM I'VE MET SOMEONE!

THEY'RE ALWAYS PRESSURING ME TO DATE, SO I CAN USE THAT TO MY ADVANTAGE NOW...

I MEAN, COME ON, POP...

I'D LOOK LIKE A DORK IF I HAVE TO BEG YOU FOR MONEY ANY TIME I TAKE HER OUT. I HAVE TO EARN THE DOUGH MYSELF.

ERM...YOU DON'T THINK I'M GOING THROUGH EXCESSIVE TROUBLE JUST TO, UM, AVOID MY ROOMMATE, DO YOU?

COOL.

AND IT WORKS OUT PERFECTLY...SHE'S, UH, A WAITRESS AND HAS THE NIGHT SHIFT.

NOW I'M WORKING NIGHTS TOO, SO WE'LL BOTH BE FREE DURING THE DAY.

GREAT. NOW I JUST GOTTA MAKE THE CALL AND I'LL BE GOOD FOR THE SEMESTER...

...LONG AS NOTHING UNEXPECTED COMES UP.

WUMP

IS SHE A BABE?!

GWUH! ISN'T MOM LISTENING?

NO?

UH... WELL....

WELL, SHE'S PRETTY TALL FOR A COUGAR.

IN GREAT SHAPE, REALLY ATHLETIC.

BLONDE... YEAH, YEAH, I KNOW, HEH.

AND THE CUTEST SMILE.

OH... IT'S...SAM.

ER, YEAH, SHORT FOR SAMANTHA, OF COURSE!

I'M STILL GETTING TO KNOW HER...I THINK WE'VE GOT LOTS IN COMMON.

OH, YANNO. MUSIC. MOVIES. STUFF.

SHE'S INTO SPORTS, AT LEAST. SHE'S DEFINITELY ONE OF THE GUYS, HEH.

HELP CHIBI-CODY FIND HIS WAY OUT!

MY ROOMMATE'S... NOTHING SPECIAL. HONESTLY, POP, THERE'S SO MUCH GOING ON IT'S NOT LIKE I'LL BE SEEING MUCH OF HIM...ESPECIALLY WITH THE JOB, YEAH.

DON'T WORRY, I'LL KEEP YOU UPDATED ON EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS WITH...SAM.

OKAY. YEAH, YOU TOO.

BYE...

HUH? OH, TODD'S DOING GREAT, I JUST SAW HIM THIS MORNING.

I'M SURE I'LL BE MAKING LOTS OF NEW FRIENDS HERE TOO, THOUGH. THE DORM SEEMS...FRIENDLY.

RRRGH. I'M SUCH A TERRIBLE SON.

WHAT A DAY. MAYBE SOME TV WILL CLEAR MY HEAD...

CLICK

ND IT'S FOURTH DOWN, SI
UTES TO
OLD ON
VERNS
T. AN

'ELLO! WATCHIN' TH' GAME, AREYA?

YEAH. ALONE.

AW, WE'LL KEEP YOU COMPANY.

NEVAH UNDAHSTOOD WHY YOU AMERICANS ARE SO INTO THIS "FOOTBALL." BUT THEN, AI DO LAIKE TH' UNIFORMS.

YEAH, THE PANTS'RE WAY TIGHTER THAN IN SOCCER!

OH, IT'S PRETTY SIMPLE, ACTUALLY.

AI MEAN, MOST OF 'EM 'RE A MAITE CHUBBEH, BUT NUMBAH 83 THERE...

TOTALLY, DUDE! BUNS OF GRIDIRON!

THE MALE REAR END IS JUDGED ON A WAY COMPLICATED FORMULA OF SHAPE, DEPTH, TONE, PROPORTIONAL SIZE...

HOW CAN YOU NOT BE IMPRESSED IF A PERFECT SPECIMEN IS FOUND?

!

OH FOR... WOULD YOU TWO CAN THE HORMONES FOR A WHILE? I'M TRYINB TO WATCH HERE...

HONESTLY, THIS FASCINATION WITH BUTTS MAKES NO SENSE...

OKAY, THAT DOES IT!

CLICK

I'M NOT TURNING THIS ON AGAIN UNTIL YOU TWO PUTZES LEAVE!

'EY, YOU CAN'T DO THAUT! THIS IS A PUBLIC AREA!

TOUGH! I WAS HERE FIRST.

BOGUS, DUDE.

WANNA FIGHT ME FOR THE REMOTE?

GO AHEAD. TRY IT.

WAIT!

GYAAAH!

NO FAIR! STOPPIT!

OKAY, OKAY, I GIVE UP, I GIVE UHUP! UNCLE—UNCLE—*UNCLE!*

AHSA GOH?%
....!!

THINK THEY CAN GET RID OF ME THAT EASILY, HUH? I'LL SHOW THEM. YEAH.

BESIDES, I WAS JUST KIDDING. CAN'T THEY TAKE A JOKE? I MEAN, I CAN TAKE A JOKE. ASK ANYONE.

LIKE...TODD. OR. UM. MY PARENTS. YEAH. Y'KNOW, THE PEOPLE I'VE BLOWN OFF, AND LIED TO, BEFORE BULLYING MY ROOMMATE.

WOW, YOU SURE ACCOMPLISHED A LOT IN ONE MORNING, CODY. I HOPE YOU'RE PROUD OF YOURSELF.

IT'S GONNA BE ONE FUN-FILLED SEMESTER AT THIS RATE, AIN'T IT?

SOMETHING ON YOUR MIND THERE, CODY?

NAH, I'M JUST BUMMED BECAUSE...I, UH, CAN'T WATCH THE GAME. THE LOUNGE IS...TOO CROWDED.

THAT'S A SHAME. SAY, I WAS JUST ON MY WAY HOME TO WATCH THE GAME NOW...

C'MON, WHY DON'T YOU JOIN ME?

I'VE GOT A BIG-SCREEN TV AND EVERYTHIN'.

WELL...I DON'T...

AW, HELL, WHY NOT?

THANKS A BUNCH, JEFF. I OWE YOU ONE...

EH, S'NOTHIN'. THINK OF IT AS AN APOLOGY FOR SOAKIN' YOU THE FIRST DAY.

BY THE WAY, HOLD TIGHT. I DRIVE PRETTY FAST.

DUDE...I'M A 6'4" BOUNCER IN A SPORTS CAR.

I HAVE NOWHERE TO MOVE.

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THIS PAD'S NOT MUCH, BUT I CALL IT HOME.

IT'S PRETTY COOL.

THANKS! PULL UP A CHAIR, MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME.

HUH?

OH.

WOULD YA LIKE A DRINK?

NOT RIGHT NOW, THANKS.

OKAY, FEEL FREE TO GRAB ONE WHENEVER YOU LIKE.

ANYWAY, I'M GONNA CHANGE OUT OF THESE WORK CLOTHES. GO AHEAD AND TURN THE GAME ON.

THAT'S A LOT OF REMOTES...

UP NEXT, WE
THE BIGGES
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I'VE FALLEN... AN
I CA GET U--

CLICK

HEH.

SORRY 'BOUT THAT.

I FORGOT THE UNIVERSAL REMOTE BROKE LAST WEEK AND I STILL NEED TO REPLACE IT.

HOPE I DON'T SPRING ANY OTHER SURPRISES ON YA.

GREAT GAME SO FAR, EH? DUNNO 'BOUT YOU, BUT HALFTIME ALWAYS BORES ME TO DEATH. HOW 'BOUT WE SKIP IT AND PLAY A FEW ROUNDS OF VIDEO GAMES INSTEAD? I GOT LOTSA DRIVING GAMES.

SOUNDS GOOD TO ME. I CAN'T STAND *FAKING THAT I'M INTERESTED IN CHEERLEADER BOOBIEFESTS* MARCHING BAND MUSIC ANYWAYS.

ALRIGHTY. I JUST BOUGHT *STUNT ICONS V* YESTERDAY. LEMME GO FIND IT.

ROCKIN'.

HM.

THERE'S SOMETHING STUCK UNDER HERE.

LOOKS LIKE... A PHOTOP

IT'S JEFF... WITH...A GUY.

HE'S GAY? BI?

WOW. WHO WOULDA THOUGHT?

HUH.

SO.

UM...

I'M HERE WITH A SEXY HANDYMAN THAT I'VE ONLY MET A FEW TIMES, WHO APPEARS TO HAVE A THING FOR BIG GUYS, AND HE RANDOMLY INVITED ME OVER TO HIS EMPTY APARTMENT TODAY.

. . .

ISN'T THIS WHAT BAD PORN FLICKS ARE BASED AROUND?? DID HE FIND OUT I'M GAY? IS HE WAITING TO MAKE A MOVE ON ME OR SOMETHING?

THIS GAME GOT GREAT REVIEWS. I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE, I WANTED TO TRY GOING ONE ON ONE WITH SOMEONE.

YANNO, I JUST REMEMBERED...I GOT KARATE CLASS TODAY. AND I THINK I ASKED A BUDDY TO TAPE THE GAME FOR ME. SO I GOTTA BE GOING.

BUT I--

THANKS FOR... EVERYTHING. CATCH YOU LATER?

OKAY. BYE!

...

HELLO AGAIN.

YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO GET HOME FROM HERE, DO YOU?

UM, YEAH. SORRY 'BOUT THAT...

S'OKAY. I CAN GIVE YA A RIDE BACK.

BUT WHAT'S GOING ON? YOU'RE TENSE ALL OF A SUDDEN. DID SOMEONE CALL ABOUT A FAMILY EMERGENCY OR SOMETHING?

HE SEEMS CONCERNED. MAYBE HE REALLY HAS HONORABLE INTENTIONS.

IS HE FEELING ME UP?

OR IS HE JUST TRYING TO LOOK LIKE A NICE GUY?

MAN, HIS HANDS ARE WARM. STRONG, TOO. HANDYMAN'S GRIP.

SO IS IT THAT YOU DON'T TRUST HIM, OR YOU DON'T TRUST YOURSELF?

OH, NO. SO THAT'S WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT.

WAIT, I...

I WENT AND DID IT AGAIN. I KEEP THINKING IT WON'T MATTER TO EVERYONE. IT'S JUST SO EASY TO BECOME... Y'KNOW, COMPLACENT, LIVING WHERE WE DO.

YOU GET... CARELESS.

AND THEN YOU FREAK PEOPLE OUT.

NO NO NO, IT'S NOTHING LIKE THAT!

IT'S JUST THAT...I...I'M... I DON'T...

YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TO EXPLAIN YOURSELF, CODY. I UNDERSTAND.

BEING GAY WILL ALWAYS MAKE SOME PEOPLE UNCOMFORTABLE, NO MATTER WHERE YOU GO. MAYBE FOR DIFFERENT REASONS...NOT ALWAYS GOOD ONES... BUT FOR NOW, IT'S JUST A FACT OF LIFE.

I HAVE TO RESPECT THAT. I MAY NOT LIKE IT, BUT IT'S NOT ALL UP TO ME.

I'D BE DELUDING MYSELF TO THINK OTHERWISE.

OH, LISTEN TO ME RAMBLE. ANYWAY, LET ME CALL YOU A TAXI. YOU DON'T WANT TO HEAR THIS.

ACTUALLY, JEFF, I UNDERSTAND THIS A LOT BETTER THAN YOU MIGHT THINK...

WAIT, YOU MEAN YOU'RE--

GAY?

YEP.

BUT... YOU--

I'M SORRY I OVERREACTED. I CAN'T EVEN FIGURE OUT HOW TO LIVE WITH MYSELF, LET ALONE OTHER GAY FRIENDS.

NOT THE MOST TACTFUL OF RESPONSES, BUT IT SEEMS LIKE YOU'VE GOT SOME...ISSUES, TO SAY THE LEAST.

ACTUALLY, YEAH...

D'JA LIKE TO TALK ABOUT IT?

KOFF

SO...UM, HOW LONG HAVE YOU KNOWN?

SIGH. ABOUT SIX YEARS.

YOU MEAN THIS ENTIRE TIME YOU'VE KEPT IT ALL BOTTLED UP? JUST NEVER HAD TO FACE IT?

THAT MUST'VE BEEN MIND-BOGGLING.

PRETTY MUCH.

NOT REALLY. WITH FAMILY OR CLASSMATES AROUND, THERE WAS ALWAYS THE PARANOIA OF NOT KNOWING WHO WAS WATCHING... SELF-DISCIPLINE BECAME SECOND NATURE, AND I THOUGHT I COULD KEEP IT A NON-ISSUE FOREVER.

THEN...NOW THAT I'M UP HERE, IT'S LIKE MY BODY SUDDENLY KNOWS I'M AWAY FROM PRYING EYES. I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN IGNORE IT ANYMORE.

OF COURSE YOU COULDN'T IGNORE IT FOREVER. IT'S NOT HEALTHY!

YEAH, WELL, IT SEEMED UNHEALTHIER TO ADDRESS IT.

HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT?

EH, THE SAME WAY ALL OTHER THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLDS WHO'VE NEVER KNOWN ANYONE HOMOSEXUAL DO. YOU KNOW ONLY WHAT YOU SEE, WHAT YOU HEAR.

OUR NEXT BOOK WAS "LITTLE MEN"...

HATED IT!!

YOU'VE BEEN SHOWN THAT GAYS HAVE TO WORK HARDER TO EARN RESPECT, AND MAYBE NEVER SUCCEED...

THAT BEING GAY AUTOMATICALLY MAKES YOU AN EASY TARGET FOR CHEAP JOKES...

THAT YOU MIGHT GET YOUR TAIL KICKED BY ANYONE WHO FELT YOU DESERVED IT, BECAUSE OF WHO YOU ARE...

EVEN IF IT MEANT A TOTAL IMAGE MAKEOVER, I WASN'T GOING TO LET ANYONE SEE THE "REAL" ME.

EVER.

IT TOOK A LOT OF TIME, WORK... AND EVEN SOME ASS-KICKING, BUT IF NOTHING ELSE, I FINALLY FELT LIKE I'D GOTTEN THE RESPECT.

QUITE A WAY TO EARN IT.

I DIDN'T THINK THERE WAS ANY OTHER WAY.

YOU DO REALIZE THERE IS MIDDLE GROUND BETWEEN BEING A FLAMER AND DRIPPING TESTOSTERONE, RIGHT? I MEAN...LOOK AT ME. I DIDN'T HAVE TO GO OVERBOARD JUST TO STAY ALIVE, BUT YOU DIDN'T SUSPECT ME, DID YOU?

TRUE...

SO...LIKE YOU, THEY JUST HAVE TO SEE YOU CAN BE GAY YET ACT "NORMALLY" TOO, RIGHT?

BUT HOW MANY OF THEM *WANT* TO ACCEPT THAT?

I DUNNO, BUT THEY MIGHT PREFER BEING GIVEN THE OPTION, TO BEING FORCE-FED YOUR "I'M-TOO-MACHO-TO-BE-GAY" FACADE INSTEAD.

TOUCHÉ.

I THINK YOU'RE OVERESTIMATING HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE ACTIVELY *TRYING* TO PIN DOWN EVERYONE'S PREFERENCES.

PERHAPS. PERHAPS NOT.

IF JOE AVERAGE NOTICES, WHETHER IN PASSING OR BY SCRUTINIZING, WHO IS TO SAY THEY EVEN CARE? WHAT'S IT GOING TO MATTER IF YOU MIGHT NEVER DEAL WITH THEM AGAIN?

SOME MAY MAKE IT AN ISSUE. AND ALL IT TAKES IS ONE...

ALL RIGHT...IT'S AN INHERENT RISK. BUT OTHERWISE YOU'RE ALSO PUSHING AWAY ANYONE WHO MIGHT HAVE A CHANCE AT BEING SUPPORTIVE.

I'M NOT A GAMBLING MAN.

MAYBE MISGUIDEDLY SUPPORTIVE WAS JUST AS SCARY.

MAYBE BEING SET UP WITH "THIS OTHER GAY FRIEND THEY KNOW", OR BEING TOLD ABOUT THE LATEST RALLY I SHOULD JOIN,

OR BEING LED TO A THERAPIST WHO'D TELL ME THINGS ABOUT MYSELF THAT I DIDN'T WANT TO KNOW SEEMED JUST AS RISKY.

WELL. WHAT A SELF-PERPETUATING LITTLE CLOSED-OFF WORLD YOU CREATED FOR YOURSELF...

IF IT'S A MATTER OF ALL OR NOTHING...WELL, IT'S EASIER TO BE FEARED THAN UNDERSTOOD.

OKAY, COMPARE YOURSELF TO SOMEONE LIKE JAKE, WHO CLEARLY DOESN'T CARE WE KNOW HE CHASES GUYS TOO.

HEY NOW, HOLD ON A SECOND. YOU'RE TRYING TO TELL ME THAT ***STRAIGHT*** TEENAGED MALES ARE ANY BETTER AT CONTROLLING THEIR HORMONES?

YEAH... WELL... UM...

THAT OVERSEXED LAMEBRAIN?! HE'S EXACTLY THE TYPE THAT GIVES US A BAD REPUTATION FOR BEING PROMISCUOUS AND HORNY.

OKAY, YOU GOT ME THERE.

SO THAT ASIDE, WHAT ELSE CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT HIM?

LIKE WHAT? HE'S A TOUCHY-FEELY MASTER OF HORIZONTAL DANCE THAT CHEERFULLY EXPLOITS THE FACT THAT LOTS OF FOLKS FIND AUSTRALIANS SEXY.

OR PUT ANOTHER WAY, HE'S A FRIENDLY DANCE MAJOR ORIGINALLY FROM BRISBANE, WHO HAS SPENT A LOT OF TIME BEING SOCIABLE AROUND THE DORM. AND FINE, FINE, SO HE PUTS THE "TRY" IN TRI-SEXUAL.
THE POINT IS, PEOPLE KNOW HE'S A PLAYER, BUT AT LEAST THEY KNOW WHO HE IS, GOOD TRAITS AND BAD. WHILE YOU...?

I'M...UH... "THAT GRUMPY SILENT GUY..."?

YEP. SURE, THEY DON'T KNOW YOU'RE GAY... THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW YOUR NAME.

SO WHO'S GOT THE BETTER REPUTATION-- YOU, OR JAKE?

BETTER QUESTION. WHO'S HAPPIER?

SO WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? YOU THINK JUST HOPPING RIGHT OUT AND FINDING A GUY IS GOING TO SOLVE EVERYTHING, IS IT?

WELL...THERE IS THIS COWORKER THAT KINDA CAUGHT MY EYE LATELY...

OF COURSE NOT. BUT YOU SAID YOURSELF THAT YOU'RE FINDING IT DIFFICULT TO IGNORE YOUR HORMONES. YOU JUST NEED TO START ACKNOWLEDGING THEY EXIST BEFORE THEY SELF-DESTRUCT. OBVIOUSLY ***SOMETHING*** IS CAUSING A BUILD-UP LATELY...

OH?

YEAH, BUT IT'S ONLY A LITTLE CRUSH.

AH...

NOTHING TO GET EXCITED ABOUT. IT'LL PASS.

I SEE.

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GETTING AT.

EVEN IF I GOT UP THE NERVE, HE'S MY COWORKER! THAT'S JOB SUICIDE!

YEAH, I REMEMBER YOU GETTING THAT JOB...

BY ACCIDENT. IS IT ONE YOU HAD ACTUALLY WANTED?

WELL... NO...

THEN WHAT HAVE YOU GOT TO LOSE?

ONLY MY DIGNITY, REPUTATION, AND SANITY.

AT LEAST YOU'LL STILL HAVE YOUR LOOKS.

COME ON, I'M NOT SAYING YOU SHOULD CRACK OUT THE WEDDING INVITATIONS YET. JUST *TALK* TO HIM! DO YOU EVEN KNOW IF HE'S ATTACHED?

AT LEAST FIND THAT OUT, AND YOU MIGHT SAVE YOURSELF A LOT OF WONDERING!

NO...

MAYBE YOU'LL HIT IT OFF RIGHT AWAY.

MAYBE YOU'LL FIND YOU AREN'T COMPATIBLE, BUT HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO INTRODUCE YOU TO A FRIEND OF HIS...

WHATEVER HAPPENS, YOU DON'T WANT TO LOOK BACK ON THIS AS A MISSED OPPORTUNITY AFTER YOU'RE FINALLY COMFORTABLE BEING GAY.

SOMEONE'LL STEP IN AND NAB HIM IF YOU STALL TOO LONG.

YEAH, I GUESS.

WHOA, HEY, I DIDN'T MEAN *I* WAS PLANNING TO! HEH-HEH!

IF NOTHING ELSE...DON'T BE SO HUNG UP ONLY ON THE PROBLEMS...

UNTIL YOU'VE CONSIDERED ALL THE POSSIBILITIES.

AND THAT'S A GOOD START FOR NOW.

4:15 PM

AW, SHOOT, IS IT THAT LATE ALREADY? I GOTTA GET READY FOR WORK SOON.

NO PROBLEMO.

I'LL DROP YOU OFF BACK AT THE DORM.

WAIT UP.

THERE'S STILL TIME TO SAY THIS...

I...CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH. I DON'T KNOW IF I COULD HAVE MADE IT THROUGH THE DAY WITHOUT THIS TALK, LET ALONE THE SEMESTER.

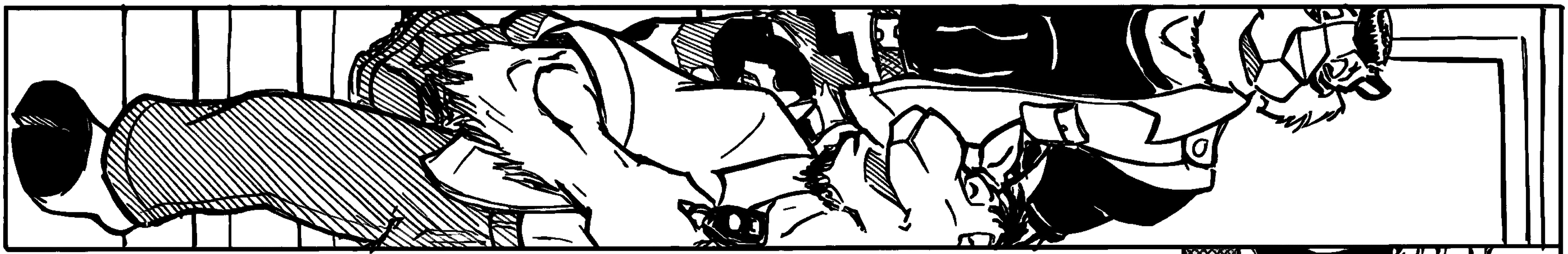
I DON'T MAKE FRIENDS OFTEN, SO WHILE I'D LOVE TO CALL YOU ONE, YOU'LL HAVE TO LET ME KNOW HOW TO EARN THAT RIGHT WITH YOU.

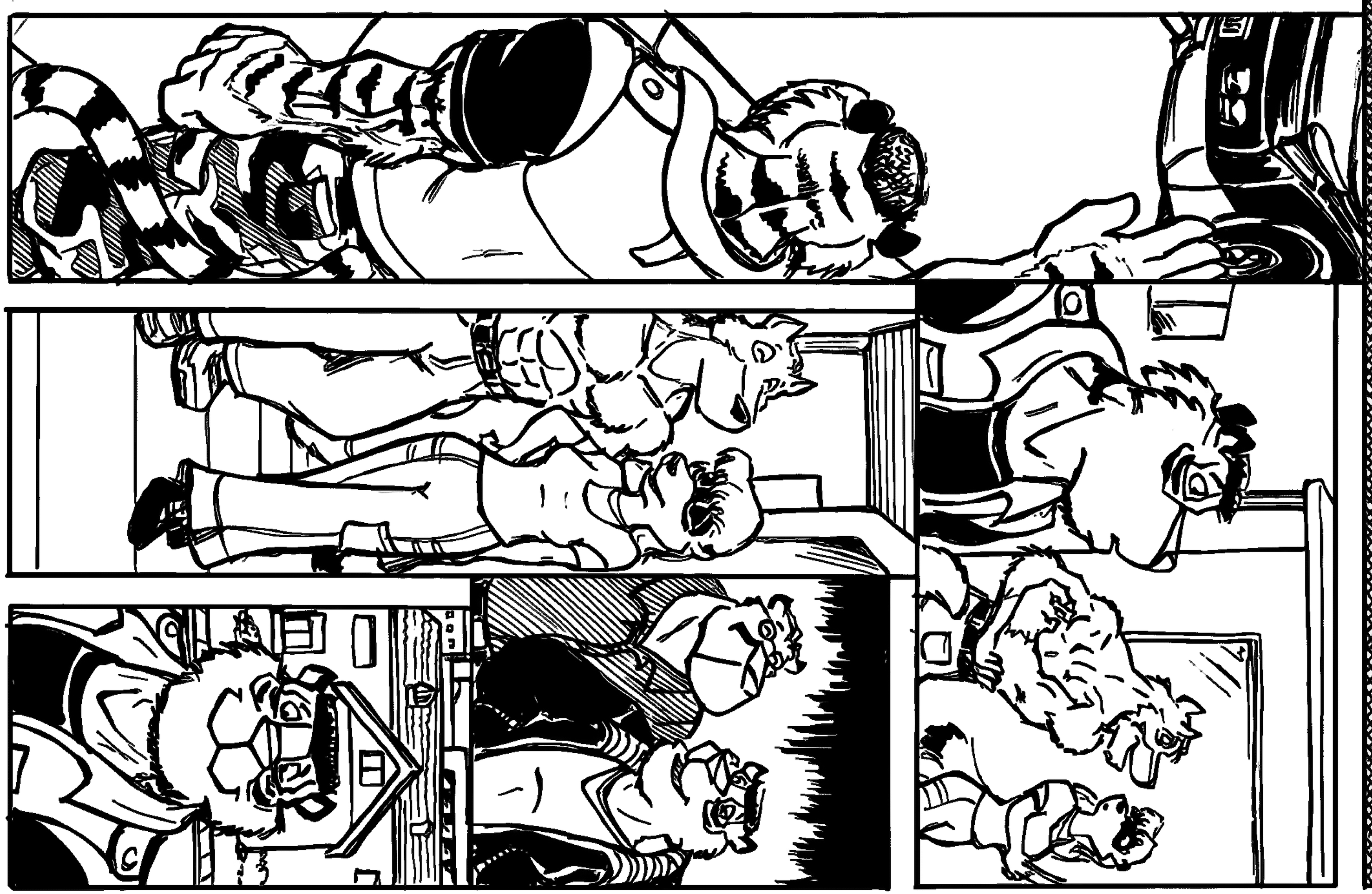
AFTER ALL THAT? C'MERE, YOU BIG LUG!

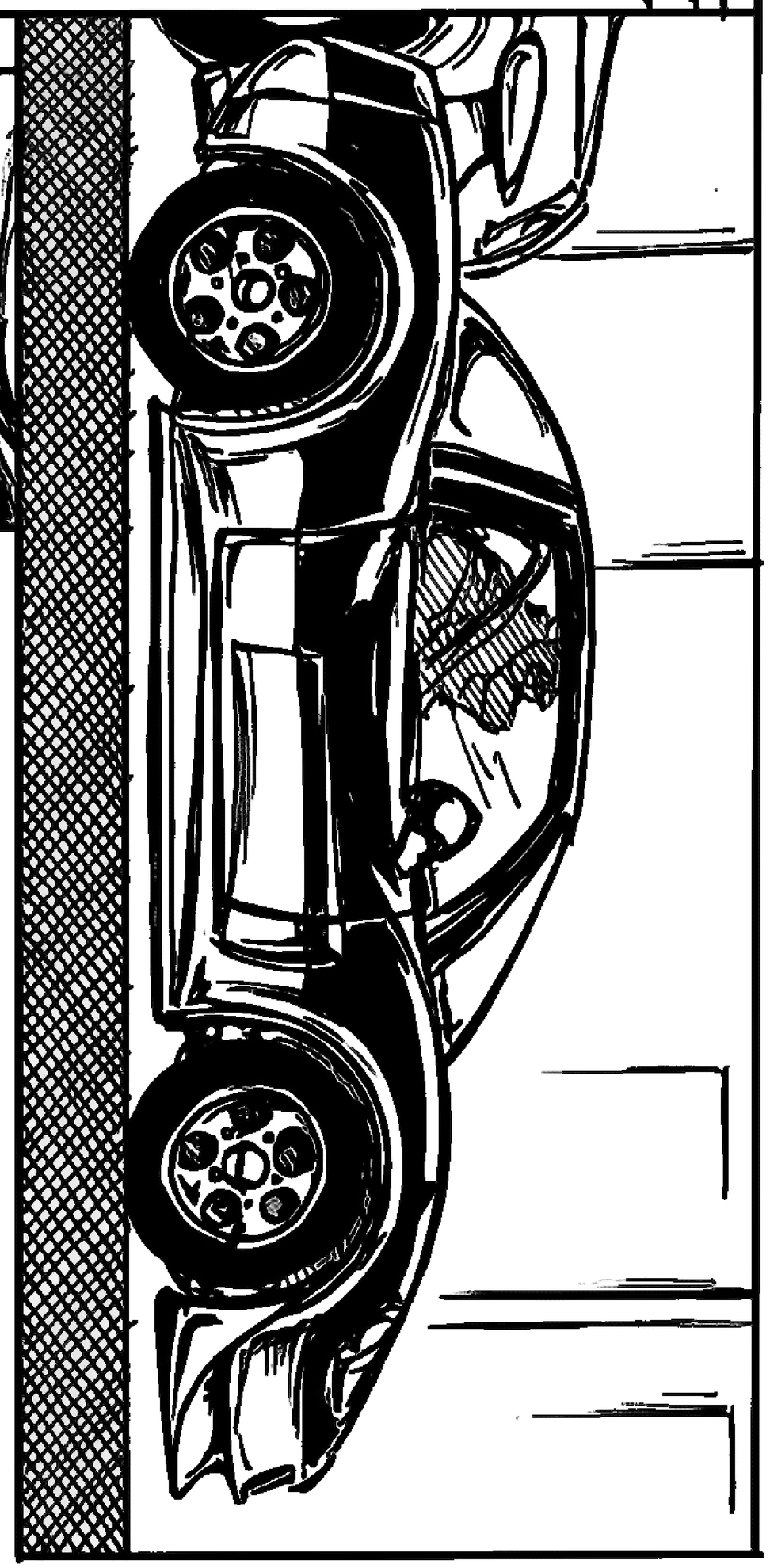
WELL... JUST THIS ONCE...

HEH, YOU DIDN'T PASS OUT. I'D SAY WE'RE MAKING PROGRESS.

A LITTLE.







"RINGTONE"

Y'ELLO, JEFF CORNWALLIS SPEAKING...

GREETINGS, JEFF, DEAR.

GAH...I TOLD YOU TO STAY OFF MY BUSINESS LINE.

OH, I'LL MAKE IT QUICK.

I'M JUST WONDERING IF YOU HAD A GOOD TIME WITH YOUR MUSCLE-BOUND STRIPEY STUD THERE...

YOU TWO WERE IN THERE AN AWFUL LONG TIME.

MY--? HOW DID...WHERE ARE YOU?!

OH, I'M... AROUND. LIKE I ALWAYS AM.

WELL? ANSWER THE QUESTION.

LOOK, HE'S JUST A BUDDY, AND THAT'S ALL HE'LL EVER BE TO ME.

YOU'RE NOT FOOLING ME. I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE AFTER.

YOU MUST... INTRODUCE US SOMETIME. OR I'LL HAVE TO MAKE HIS ACQUAINTANCE ON MY OWN.

STAY AWAY FROM HIM!

HIT A NERVE, DID I? I KNEW IT.

NO! HE... OH, I SWEAR, IF YOU TRY TO RUIN HIS LIFE TOO, I'LL--

NO, JEFFREY. THAT'S YOUR JOB.

YOU KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU GET TOO CLOSE.

I WON'T.

WE'LL SEE.

1:49
DISCONNECTED

"TOO CLOSE", HUH?

FINE, THEN.

THERE'S PLENTY I CAN DO FROM A DISTANCE.

TO BE CONTINUED



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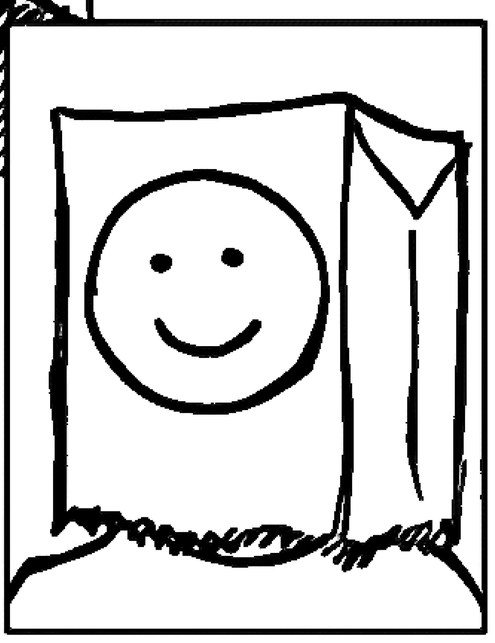


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I.S.O.: a common acronym of classified and personal ads; an abbreviation for "In Search Of."

iso-: prefix meaning equal; uniform. Thus, not different from anyone else.

i.s.o.: a comic about a repressed youth in search of a life equal to everyone else.